

# Request Expulsion of Tass From Hill Press Galleries

## Wisconsin Newsman Cites Affidavit That Soviet Agency is Kremlin Organ

*If you live in the 5500 block of Ascot Court in Arlington, or the 6200 block of Wilson Boulevard in Falls Church or the 6100 block of the Leesburgh Pike, you may be acquainted with Leonid Buz, Viatcheslav Tchernychev, or Vitaly Gan.*

These gentlemen are accredited correspondents of TASS News Agency. I believe I know one of them (although I am not at all good with Russian names) as the reasonably affable man who occupied the seat next to me at the last three of Richard Nixon's press conferences.

After Nixon's resignation, I did not see him again until the day that the Rockefeller Commission released its CIA report at the White House. "When will the KGB be investigated by the Politburo?" I asked with a smile. At first, my Soviet acquaintance seemed stunned. But then he smiled and answered "I would not wait for that!"

There is a remote possibility that Messrs Buz, Gan and Tchernychev (along with Yuri Barsukov of Chevy Chase) may be in the headlines shortly.

For the correspondent of Wisconsin's Madison Capital Journal, Stuart Dean Levitan, has filed the following letter with the Standing Committee of Correspondents — who control the accreditation of journalists to the Senate and House press galleries:

*"Valentine's Day, 1977*

*Dear Standing Committee:*

*Hate to cause any international incidents, but — Do foreign press have exemption to the rule banning associations with government agencies? If not, I believe the several TASS reporters should have their credentials revoked, inasmuch as Ambassador Dobrynin has declared TASS to be "an organ of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R."*

*Yours down the two way street of detente,*

*(signed) Stuart Dean Levitan*

Correspondent Levitan attached an Associated Press story datelined New York, Feb. 11. This report noted that TASS — the

defendent in a \$500,000 libel suit — claims that it is an organ of the Soviet Government and thus has a right to have the suit moved to a federal court.

TASS, along with the Novosti Press Agency and the Daily World, a Communist Newspaper in New York, are being sued by Alexander Yessenin-Volpin.

Dr. Yessnin-Volpin is a Russian-born professor at Boston University who charges TASS and the others with falsely labeling him mentally ill. An affidavit from the Soviet ambassador describes TASS as "an organ of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R."

Foreign Agents Registration

*On page 308 of the 1975 report of the Attorney General to the Congress on the Administration of The Foreign Agents Registration Act, TASS is mentioned — but not correspondents Buz, Barsukov, Gan, or Tchernychev. Instead, TASS is listed only in connection with the Welt Porter*

*Publishing Co. of 1511 K Street in Washington as ("Distribution of Investment and Economic News Bulletins").*

The issue of TASS correspondents — who are on the Kremlin's payroll — is also mentioned in a Harper's Magazine article coming out next week: "Whispers In The Press Gallery". This article tells the story of how Consumer Reports and Science magazines were denied access to the Congressional press gallery.

### Historic Controversy

Levitan's letter to the Standing Committee could reopen an issue that was a major controversy of the 1950's.

For Alexander Jones, president of the prestigious American Society of Newspaper Editors, (ASNE) demanded that TASS be expelled from the Correspondents gallery in retaliation for the jailing of A.P. reporter William Oatis in Czechoslovakia.

Added to Oatis' imprisonment was the fact that Mikhail Fedorov who

*continued*

TASS Washington bureau in July of 1948 was discovered to be an aeronautical engineer, rather than a journalist.

A committee of the ASNE, including John Henry of The Washington Star, filed a seven-page brief with the Standing Committee of Correspondents, which, among other things noted:

\* Membership was limited to *"bona fide correspondents of repute in their profession."*

\* That the TASS correspondents had signed a statement that *"I am not employed by any foreign government or any representative thereof."*

\* *"Representatives of newspapers or periodicals published by trade associations, labor and fraternal organizations are excluded from membership the grounds that the facilities of the press galleries are limited and admission is not physically possible for all applicants. It is therefore even more important that there shall be no discrimination as between those who are ineligible for admission."*

\* *The Voice of America was turned down, while TASS — the voice of the Soviets — was given access.*

#### Retaliation in Moscow?

In answer to the idea that exclusion of TASS might hinder the cause of U.S. correspondents in Moscow, the ASNE replied, *"the question of enforcement of American laws and the rules and regulations of our legislative body is an American question. Our action should not in any way be influenced by fear of action that might be taken by other governments...If it is desired to accord to the representatives of foreign governments access to the Congressional Press Galleries, the representatives of all governments, our own included, should be admitted to membership."*

it did not feel qualified to *"move into the field of international diplomacy"* and voted that *"the principles of a free press can not be upheld by abridging them."*

Editor and Publisher magazine denounced this as *"so blatant and flagrant that the press should clean its own house."*

The Gannett News Bureau noted: *"A so-called reporter for TASS in Canada turned up as one of the key espionage agents who stole vital atomic secrets."*

#### Washington Post

The Washington Post suggested on Sept. 9, 1951, in an editorial entitled *"TASS MEN AS SPIES"*:

*"The primary function of TASS in this country is to report, not the news, but anything of advantage to the Soviet government...Might it not be a great deal more damaging to Soviet prestige for American newspaper and wire services to withdraw their correspondents from Moscow voluntarily and to concentrate coverage on the periphery of the Iron Curtain, whence reports from refugees could be relayed uncensored?"*

In Tulsa, the Tribune's editor, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, in an editorial entitled *"The Spineless Writers,"* described the decision against expelling TASS as: *"typical double-domed sophistry so common among press writers in the Capitol...As a phony newsman, Mr. Federov's press pass violates the correspondents own rules...It is symptomatic of the 'we-must-lat-ourselves-be-walked-over-in-order-to-show-our-good-will' attitude of so many Washington correspondents...TASS has no more business in the Congressional press galleries than the Gestapo, or the Association of Cooks and Bakers."*